



BILL BITTAR REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

Kathleen O'Neil, the town's grant writer and chairwoman of the Oxford Main Street Project Committee, shows a picture of the archway for the Little River Nature Preserve that will be off Route 67 in Oxford.

## Oxford Main Street Project to distinguish town center

BY BILL BITTAR  
REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

OXFORD — Little River Nature Preserve, a greenway along Route 67, will have trout fishing and a broad walking trail carrying hikers over wetlands behind the Oxford Baking Company. Two foot bridges leading to other side of the river will provide access to 18 acres of woodlands.

The Oxford Main Street Project will also include crosswalks and other traffic calming measures on Oxford Road (Route 67), and a nature center with a parking lot.

"This will give us a municipal center identification," Kathleen O'Neil, chairwoman of the OMSP Committee, said Wednesday. "You'll know you're going through Oxford. Now

people speed through and see bushes spelling Oxford in front of Town Hall. We're just the land between Seymour and Southbury."

"It's going to be beautiful when it's done," Andrew McGeever, the town's economic development director, said of the project. "That will be one of the focal points in town."

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## PRESERVE: Nature center in plan

O'Neil said the project, which will include sidewalks, will provide connectivity between town businesses and historic areas. The nature center, to be located off site, will have pictures of the plants and wildlife living along Little River and be a place for experiments.

O'Neil said the town's new greenway will eventually connect to the Naugatuck Greenway in Seymour. She said it will cost about \$500,000 to create the nature preserve.

On Wednesday night, the Board of Selectmen voted to authorize the OMSP Committee to pursue a \$120,000 Connecticut Energy and Environmental Protection Recreational Trails grant

for the first phase of the project.

O'Neil, who is also the town's grant writer, said other pending grant applications are before Newtown Savings Bank and the Connecticut Community Foundation.

A total of \$30,000 worth of grants were already secured from the Katharine Mathies Foundation, the Valley Community Foundation and the Community Support Group.

McGeever, who is a committee member, will try to get donations from the business community and O'Neil said co-founders of the nature preserve will make donations.

The project has also received assistance from vol-

unteers. Employees of Thule Group, a Seymour firm, assisted in the removal of invasive weeds from the site and the company is committed to help see the project to completion.

The Housatonic Valley Association guided the eradication of invasive plants and provided information and support. O'Neil said the Boy Scouts of America are expected to help with signs and bird watching areas.

"I'm extremely excited about the prospects of such a multifaceted project in Oxford," First Selectman George R. Temple said. "And I think it will greatly enhance the quality of life in town."

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